

Introduction

S*hakespeare on the Double! Romeo and Juliet* provides the full text of the Bard's play side by side with an easy-to-read modern English translation that you can understand. You no longer have to wonder about the meaning of "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet"! You can read the Shakespearean text on the left-hand pages and check the right-hand pages when Shakespeare's language stumps you. Or you can read only the translation, which enables you to understand the action and characters, as an introduction to the Shakespearean English. You can also read both, referring easily between the original text and the modern translation. Any way you choose, you can now fully understand every line of the Bard's masterpiece!

We've also provided you with some additional resources:

- **Brief synopsis** of the plot and action provides a broad-strokes overview of the play.
- **Comprehensive character list** covers the actions, motivations, and characteristics of each major player.
- **Visual character map** displays who the major characters are and how they relate to each other.
- **Cycle-of-death** pinpoints the sequence of deaths in the play, including who dies, how they die, and why they die.
- **Reflective questions** help you delve even more into the themes and meanings of the play.

Reading Shakespeare can be slow and challenging. No more! With *Shakespeare on the Double! Romeo and Juliet*, you can read the play in language that you can grasp quickly and thoroughly.



Synopsis

ACT I

Prologue

At Verona, the chorus describes a lengthy blood-feud between the rival houses of Capulet and Montague. The prolonged enmity causes the deaths of two lovers. Their sacrifice is necessary to end the hostilities.

Scene 1

On a street in Verona, Capulet's servants, Gregory and Sampson, encounter Montague's men, Abraham and Balthasar. On the Montague side, Benvolio joins the fray with his sword raised. On the Capulet side, Tybalt follows Benvolio. Alerted to the street brawl, Capulet and his wife hurry to the scene. At Capulet's demand for a weapon, Prince Escalus halts the latest outbreak of the lengthy feud. He condemns to death the next citizen who breaches the peace. The prince summons Montague to court that afternoon in Old Freetown and arranges a meeting with Capulet. Meanwhile, Lady Montague frets over her son Romeo's unhappiness. Benvolio recalls seeing Romeo wandering a grove west of Verona an hour before sunrise. Despondent and lovesick, Romeo arrives in Verona shortly after nine. Benvolio is unable to lift Romeo's spirits.

Scene 2

In a Verona street, Count Paris discusses with Capulet a betrothal with Capulet's 13-year-old daughter Juliet. Capulet hesitates to pledge so young a girl to matrimony, yet accepts Paris's proposal if Juliet concurs with the plans. Capulet invites Paris to a traditional feast at the Capulet house on Sunday evening. An illiterate servant carries the invitation to the guests' homes. The servant stops Benvolio and Romeo to help him decipher the guest list. Benvolio decides to put on a mask and intrude on the party. Still mooning over Rosaline, who is one of the guests, Romeo agrees to accompany Benvolio.

Scene 3

At the Capulet home, Lady Capulet and the nurse discuss with Juliet the marriage offer from Paris. The nurse reminisces over her years of tending Juliet, whom she nursed in infancy after the death of the nurse's daughter Susan. Juliet is not eager to marry, but she promises to study her suitor's face and behavior at the feast.

Scene 4

That night, Romeo follows Benvolio and their high-spirited friend Mercutio by torchlight to the Capulet house. Mercutio annoys Romeo with blather about Queen Mab, the fairy queen, who influences human dreams.

Scene 5

Friends and relatives of the Capulets dance at a ball and await a late-night banquet. Although Romeo is a Montague, Capulet welcomes him. Romeo falls instantly in love with Juliet. Her hostile cousin Tybalt threatens to attack Romeo for coming uninvited to the gathering. Capulet quiets Tybalt, his brother's son, reminding him that the host has the last word on invitations. Capulet recalls when he was young and went masked to amusements. Romeo, unaware of Juliet's identity, kisses her. Too late, he and Juliet learn that they are members of opposite sides of the feuding Capulets and Montagues.



ACT II

Prologue

The chorus reports that Romeo has given up his pursuit of Rosaline because he prefers Juliet. Unlike the dismissive Rosaline, Juliet is more affectionate and receptive of Romeo's courtship.

Scene 1

Before dawn the next morning, Romeo paces alongside the Capulet orchard. He avoids his friends, who ridicule his lovesickness. He climbs the wall to get a second look at Juliet.

Scene 2

Outside Juliet's room, Romeo hears her sighing with love for him. She regrets that they belong to feuding families. He moves close enough to

4 Romeo and Juliet

reveal his presence. The two denounce their family connections and pledge mutual love.

Scene 3

At sunrise, a Franciscan priest, Friar Laurence, collects herbs. Romeo arrives to discuss his new love. The friar suspects that Romeo flits from one girl to another out of immaturity. Friar Laurence encourages the idea of Romeo's union with Juliet as a way to end the protracted feud between the Capulets and the Montagues.

Scene 4

On Monday morning, Romeo walks through Verona in an upbeat mood that puzzles Benvolio and Mercutio. Romeo makes plans with Juliet's nurse to get Juliet to Friar Laurence's cell for the wedding. As an excuse to see the Friar, Juliet will get permission from her parents to go to confession. The nurse, who has tended Juliet from birth, warns Romeo not to deceive or disappoint the girl. Romeo sends a rope ladder with the nurse.

Scene 5

At the Capulet orchard, Juliet anticipates the nurse, who has not returned by noon. The nurse, arriving breathless from her walk to town, informs Juliet that Romeo will marry her that afternoon at Friar Laurence's cell. The rope ladder will allow Romeo to unite with his wife at her room that night.

Scene 6

Romeo and Juliet meet a third time at Friar Laurence's cell. He hurriedly unites them in wedlock.



ACT III

Scene 1

Benvolio and Mercutio taunt Tybalt with his nickname, the "Prince of Cats." Tybalt strikes back. Because Romeo is now Tybalt's cousin by marriage, he stands between Tybalt and Mercutio. Aiming under Romeo's arm, Tybalt thrusts his sword into Mercutio. Mercutio, realizing that he is mortally wounded, curses the Capulet and Montague families. In a rage at the loss of Mercutio, Romeo kills Tybalt. The Capulets demand punishment for Tybalt's killer. Lady Capulet proposes that Prince Escalus execute Romeo. The prince chooses a merciful course by exiling Romeo from Verona.

Scene 2

When the nurse informs Juliet of the latest street fight, Juliet mourns for Tybalt, even though he had a reputation for provoking his enemies. Juliet sends the nurse with a ring for Romeo, who has retreated to Friar Laurence's cell.

Scene 3

Meanwhile, Romeo grieves over a banishment that will end his marriage to Juliet. The nurse urges Romeo to help Juliet recover from the loss of a dear cousin. The friar suggests that Romeo go to Mantua and wait until the friar can work out a solution. Balthasar, Romeo's servant, will carry messages from Friar Laurence to Mantua.

Scene 4

Concerned for his daughter's intense sorrow, Capulet sets the wedding for Thursday. He hopes that marriage to Count Paris will ease his daughter's bouts of weeping. When Juliet balks at the plan, her father demands that she report to St. Peter's Church at the appointed time.

Scene 5

At daylight on Tuesday, the bridal couple hear the song of a lark, a token of morning. Juliet tries to keep Romeo in her room, but he must leave for Mantua or else face arrest. Capulet, who doesn't suspect his daughter's secret marriage, orders her to prepare for a wedding with Paris. The nurse thinks that Paris is the better choice of mate for Juliet. Juliet retreats to the friar's cell for advice.



ACT IV

Scene 1

When Juliet reaches Friar Laurence's cell, she encounters Paris finalizing the wedding plans. She gives him no indication of her marriage to the recently exiled Romeo. After Paris leaves her to confess in privacy, she mourns the turn of events that separates her from her husband. The friar chooses a powerful herb to suppress Juliet's vital functions. By swallowing the herb that night, Juliet will seem dead. The Capulets will inter her body above ground in the family burial vault. The ruse gives the friar time enough to inform Romeo of Juliet's quandary and to summon Romeo back to Verona to rescue his wife.

Scene 2

The Capulets hurriedly prepare food and invite a few friends to the wedding. They scale back the usual marriage celebration out of respect for Tybalt's recent death. Juliet pretends to comply by selecting clothes for the wedding. Capulet decides to hold the wedding on Wednesday and resolves to stay up all night.

Scene 3

At bedtime, Juliet sends the nurse away and pretends to pray to ready her spirit for marriage. She swallows the herb and, fully clothed, swoons onto the bed.

Scene 4

On Wednesday morning, the Capulets send the nurse to call Juliet. Count Paris plans to awaken his bride and escort her to the ceremony.

Scene 5

The nurse finds Juliet lifeless and unresponsive. The Capulets, Paris, and the nurse mourn Juliet's sudden demise. Friar Laurence tells them to rejoice that Juliet is in heaven. He instructs the family to dress her corpse and to sprinkle rosemary as a symbol of remembrance. He implies that God is punishing them. Anticipating a free meal, the musicians shift from wedding music to funeral songs.



ACT V

Scene 1

When Balthasar arrives in Mantua, he breaks the news to Romeo that Juliet is dead and buried. Romeo breaks city laws by buying poison from a poor pharmacist for forty ducats. Romeo hurries from Mantua to Verona to kill himself beside Juliet's corpse.

Scene 2

Friar John reports to Friar Laurence that a local quarantine prevented the delivery of a message to Romeo at Mantua. Friar Laurence plans to send another letter to Romeo. Within hours of Juliet's awakening in the tomb, Friar Laurence hurries to the vault with tools to open it and set her free. He plans to conceal Juliet at his cell until Romeo can arrive from Mantua.

Scene 3

By torchlight, Paris and his page reach the Capulet vault, where Paris scatters flowers and fragrant water to honor his bride-to-be. When Romeo and Balthasar arrive, Paris hides in the shadows. In the gloom, Romeo does not recognize him. Paris accuses Romeo of killing Tybalt and, indirectly, causing Juliet's death from grief. Romeo is unwilling to kill Paris, but he can't avoid another duel. Paris collapses and requests burial near Juliet. Romeo realizes that he has killed Paris. Near Tybalt's draped corpse in the vault, Romeo finds Juliet inert, but still pink-lipped and rosy-cheeked. He embraces and kisses her, swallows the poison, and collapses.

Meanwhile, Paris's page alerts the night watch. Juliet awakens and finds Romeo dead from the poison. Friar Laurence decides to convey her to a convent, but she refuses to leave Romeo. When the watchmen approach the cemetery, Friar Laurence hurries away. Because Romeo has drunk all the poison, Juliet kisses his lips in hopes of finding a drop. She unsheathes his dagger and plunges it into her chest.

Summoned from their beds, Capulet, Lady Capulet, Montague, and Prince Escalus arrive at the tragic scene. Montague reports that his wife has died of grief for her banished son. Prince Escalus investigates the causes of the three deaths. The most inexplicable is Juliet, whom the families assumed had died two days before. Balthasar, Paris's page, and Friar Laurence testify to their knowledge of the three deaths. After reading the letter that Romeo wrote to his father, Prince Escalus blames Capulet and Montague for the family hostilities. The prince admits his own fault in allowing the feud to continue. In reference to his own loss of a kinsman, he exclaims that "all are punished." Montague grasps Capulet's hand and promises to commission a gold statue to honor Juliet for being a faithful wife to Romeo.



List of Characters

JULIET The Capulet daughter. She is presented as a young and innocent adolescent, not yet 14 years old. Her youthfulness is stressed throughout the play to illustrate her progression from adolescence to maturity and to emphasize her position as a tragic heroine. Juliet's love for Romeo gives her the strength and courage to defy her parents and face death twice.

ROMEO The Montague son, who is loved and respected in Verona. He is initially presented as a comic lover, with his inflated declarations of love for Rosaline. After meeting Juliet, he abandons his tendency to be a traditional, fashionable lover, and his language becomes intense, reflecting his genuine passion for Juliet. By avenging Mercutio's death, he sets in motion a chain of tragic events that culminate in suicide when he mistakenly believes Juliet to be dead.

MERCUTIO Kinsman to the prince and friend of Romeo. His name comes from the word *mercury*, the element that flashes like his quick temper. Mercutio is bawdy and talkative. He tries to tease Romeo out of his melancholy frame of mind. He accepts Tybalt's challenge to defend Romeo's honor. His death precipitates Romeo's rage and revenge, and the stabbing of Tybalt.

TYBALT The Capulet's nephew and Juliet's cousin. Tybalt is violent and hot-tempered, with a strong sense of honor. He challenges Romeo to a duel in response to Romeo's attending a Capulet party. His challenge to Romeo incites Mercutio, whom Tybalt stabs. Romeo then kills Tybalt.

THE NURSE Juliet's nursemaid. Since the death of her daughter Susan in infancy, the nurse has acted as confidante for Juliet. She later acts as a messenger between Juliet and Romeo. Like Mercutio, the Nurse loves to talk and reminisce, and her attitude toward love is bawdy. The Nurse is loving and affectionate toward Juliet, but compromises her position of trust when she advises Juliet to forget Romeo and comply with her parents' wishes for her to marry Paris.

FRIAR LAURENCE A brother of the Franciscan order and Romeo's confessor, who advises both Romeo and Juliet. The Friar agrees to marry the

couple in secret in the hope that marriage will restore peace between their families. His plans to reunite Juliet with Romeo go awry. The Friar concocts the potion plot through which Juliet appears dead for 42 hours in order to avoid marrying Paris. At the end of the play, the Prince recognizes the Friar's good intentions.

LORD CAPULET Juliet's father is quick-tempered and impetuous but is initially reluctant to consent to Juliet's marriage with Paris because Juliet is so young. Later, he changes his mind and angrily demands that Juliet obey his wishes. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet reconcile Capulet with his enemy Montague.

PARIS A noble young kinsman to the Prince. Paris is well-mannered and attractive and eager to marry Juliet. Romeo fights and kills Paris at the Capulet tomb when Paris assumes that Romeo has come to desecrate the bodies of Tybalt and Juliet.

BENVOLIO Montague's nephew and a friend of Romeo and Mercutio. Benvolio is the peacemaker who attempts to halt strife between Tybalt and Mercutio. After the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt, Benvolio acts as a chorus, explaining how the events took place.

LADY CAPULET A loving but controlling parent. She demands Romeo's death for killing Tybalt. In her relationship with Juliet, she is cold and distant, expecting Juliet to obey her father and marry Paris.

LORD MONTAGUE Romeo's father, who worries about his son's melancholy behavior. In a single night, he loses both his wife and son, and pledges a statue to his dead daughter-in-law.

BALTHASAR Romeo's servant. He brings Romeo the news in Mantua that Juliet is dead.

AN APOTHECARY A poverty-stricken chemist, who sells poison to Romeo in violation of the laws of Mantua.

ESCALUS, PRINCE OF VERONA Although the symbol of law and order in Verona, he fails to quell the violence between the Montagues and Capulets. Only the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, rather than the authority of the prince, restore peace.

FRIAR JOHN A brother of the Franciscan order, sent by Friar Laurence to tell Romeo of his sleeping potion plan for Juliet. A quarantine prevents the Friar from delivering the message to Romeo in Mantua.

LADY MONTAGUE In contrast with Lady Capulet, Lady Montague dislikes the violence of the feud. Like her husband, she is concerned by her son's withdrawn and secretive behavior. The news of Romeo's banishment breaks her heart. She dies of grief.

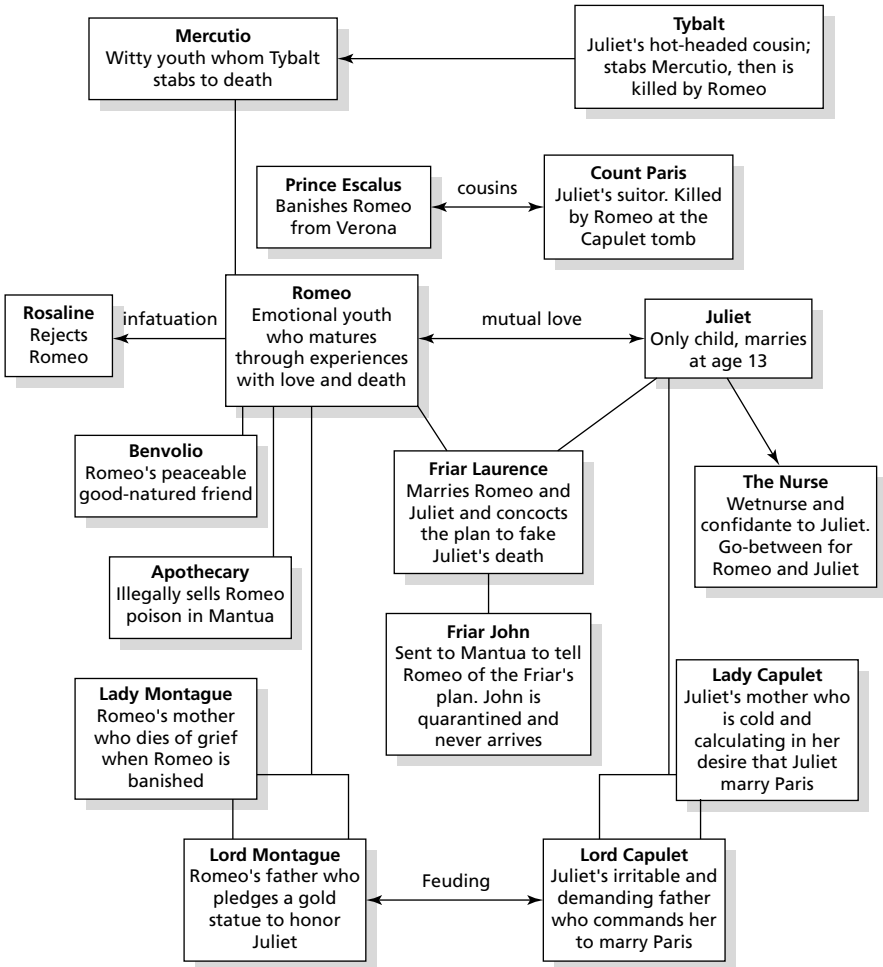
PETER A Capulet servant attending the nurse.

ABRAM A servant to Montague.

SAMPSON A boastful, posturing servant of the Capulet household.

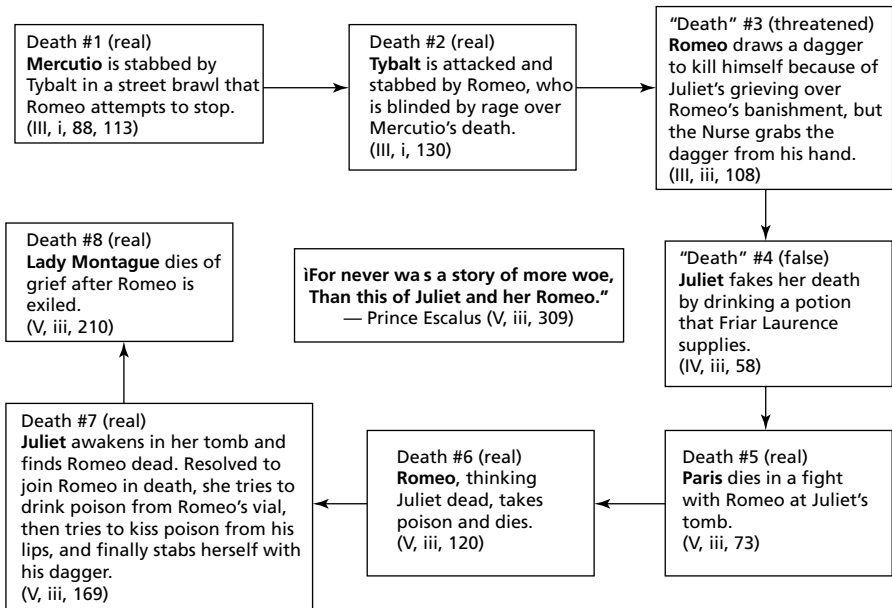
GREGORY Servant of the Capulet household who admires Sampson's brave talk.

Character Map



Cycle of Death

At its simplest, *Romeo and Juliet* is a play about finding true love in a world filled with conflict. This conflict is due to the Capulet and Montague families' ongoing feud, which is the impetus for the cycle of death throughout the play. The graphic below outlines the sequence of threatened, false, and real deaths that spur the plot.





**Shakespeare's
Romeo and Juliet**